

The Free Presbyterian Magazine

**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth” Psalm 60:4

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January 2008

Vol 113 • No 1

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

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Website of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland: www.fpchurch.org.uk.

The Free Presbyterian Magazine

Subscriptions and changes of address to be sent to the General Treasurer, Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year ends in December and subscriptions should be sent in January for the following 12 months. Prices are on back cover. One month's notice is required for change of address. Queries about delivery of the magazines should be sent to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

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Deadline for sending material to the Editor: The beginning of the month previous to publication.

The Gaelic Supplement (quarterly): Editor: Rev J MacLeod MA, 6 Church Avenue, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 6BU. Available free on request.

Youth Magazine: *The Young People's Magazine*. Editor: Rev K D Macleod BSc.

Communions

January: First Sabbath: Nkayi; **Fourth:** Auckland, Inverness, New Canaan.

February: Second Sabbath: Dingwall; **Third:** Stornoway; **Fourth:** North Uist, Zenka.

March: First Sabbath: Ullapool; **Second:** Ness, Portree, Tarbert; **Third:** Kyle of Lochalsh; **Fourth:** Barnoldswick, Gisborne, North Tolsta; **Fifth:** Ingwenya.

April: Second Sabbath: Leverburgh, Staffin; **Third:** Chesley, Laide; **Fourth:** Glasgow; Mbuma.

May: First Sabbath: Aberdeen, Grafton, London; **Second:** Achmore, New Canaan, Donsa, Kinlochberrie; **Third:** Edinburgh; **Fourth:** Chiedza.

June: First Sabbath: Auckland, Farr, Perth; **Second:** Nkayi, Shieldaig; **Third:** Lochcarron, Uig; **Fourth:** Gairloch, **Fifth:** Bulawayo, Inverness.

July: First Sabbath: Beaulie, Raasay; **Second:** Bonar, Staffin, Wellington; **Third:** Applecross; **Fourth:** Struan; Cameron.

August: First Sabbath: Dingwall; **Second:** New Canaan, Somakentana, Leverburgh; **Third:** Laide; **Fourth:** Stornoway, Vatten; **Fifth:** Stratherrick, Zenka.

September: First Sabbath: Breascleite, Chesley, Larnie, Sydney, Ullapool; **Second:** Halkirk, Mnaka, Portree; **Third:** Tarbert; **Fourth:** Barnoldswick, Ingwenya, North Uist.

October: First Sabbath: Dornoch, Grafton, Lochcarron, North Tolsta; **Second:** Gairloch, Ness; **Third:** London; **Fourth:** Edinburgh, Gisborne, Lochinver, Mbuma, Uig.

November: First Sabbath: Raasay; **Second:** Glasgow; **Third:** Santa Fe (Texas); **Fourth:** Aberdeen; **Fifth:** Chiedza.

December: First Sabbath: Singapore; **Third:** Bulawayo, Tauranga.

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Vol 113

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Providence in an Uncertain World

In early September 2007 it is likely that many readers had never heard of the Northern Rock bank. More recently it has scarcely been out of the headlines in Britain. Using loans from other banks, Northern Rock had pursued a policy of rapid expansion, and then suddenly its sources of finance dried up. In the middle of September, Northern Rock went to the Bank of England for emergency assistance. Depositors at once perceived it as no longer a safe place for their savings – in spite of the suggestion of solidity in its name. Soon, long queues of people wanting their money back snaked along the pavements from the doors of many of Northern Rock’s branches.

While the danger of depositors losing their money did not appear great, at least in the initial stages of the panic, it did reflect modern society’s attitude to risk. Most people seem to think that, if their government and big business behave correctly, they will be safe from losing their money and will be protected from most of the other dangers of life. Now, of course, government and business – and all of us – have responsibilities to others. Yet people are in great danger of forgetting that their hold on, for instance, wealth, or even smaller amounts of money, is uncertain. They have never grasped the teaching of Scripture: that “riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (Prov 23:5).

Charles Bridges comments: “The eagerness for the earthly object, and the neglect of the heavenly, show either that eternity is a delusion or that the world is mad. For were the things of eternity really believed, would not the thoughts be fixed on them, and the heart be filled with them, with but little time or room for the engrossing vanities of life? . . . The man who concentrates all his wisdom, talent and energy . . . rising up early and late taking rest, in the labour after riches, often has been at one stroke deprived of all, just when he supposed himself to be secure.” And he points to several reasons for this loss: “divine chastisement, indolence, extravagance, injustice, robbery”.

But then he goes further: “Eternity is at the door, and naked shall we go out of the world, as we came into it. Yet even this palpable consciousness fails to teach men the lessons: to cease from their own wisdom, to seek true

substance on earth, and in God's wisdom to lay up enduring 'treasures in heaven'. Yes, some money is most certainly useful to us in this life; indeed it is very nearly an absolute necessity. But we must not make money our god; we must not assume that it, or any of our possessions, or our health, or our friends and relations will be left with us permanently.

And although the average person is concerned, with some degree of justification, about the risk to his money during a run on his bank, he does not consider the absolute certainty of dying. We may speak of the *risk* of dying in particular circumstances, but death itself is not a risk – it is a certainty. For "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" (Heb 9:27). Death is not the end, as is too readily assumed today; the fact is, as the Bible teaches, we will exist for ever. And, sinners that we are, we will continue alienated from God and under His wrath and curse for ever, unless we find a solid rock on which to rest our guilty souls.

There is indeed such a rock, as the Psalmist sang: "My God is the rock of my refuge" (Ps 94:22). And his God has revealed Himself in the person of His Son – particularly when He came into the world, taking our nature, so that He might die in the place of sinners. Resting on Him – that is, believing on Him – sinners will be safe in life and in death, on the day of judgement and throughout eternity.

But let us notice a further point arising from the Northern Rock saga. Such events as the run on this Bank have an effect on the Government's standing. Events that seem to spring out of nowhere – chance events, as people might describe them – may leave the ministers of the crown looking, justifiably or otherwise, as if they are floundering, unable to maintain control of what is happening around them. But these are *not* chance events; they all happen in God's providence, for everything in the whole universe is under His control. Yet there seems to be no one, in any of the main political parties in mainland Britain, who recognises that there is a providence.

How much more hopeful we might be of the direction in which this country, and other countries, are heading if government ministers were acknowledging that the Most High is ordering all the events of their nation! Then, even in the direst straits, we might not be overly discouraged if we knew that they were in prayer before God, perhaps using the language of Jehoshaphat: "O our God . . . we have no might . . . neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee" (2 Chr 20:12).

Those who trust in God recognise that He is controlling *their* providence; they can commit the events of their lives to Him, believing that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). So, as they look at the difficulties in

their lives, including those apparently chance events which seem to come from nowhere and cast a gloomy cloud over all their future prospects, they are to believe that these difficulties will work together with other elements in their providence, for their good. Thus they grow in grace and, in particular, become more trustful, as they experience the certainty of covenant promises.

Think of Calvary and the events leading up to it. To the unthinking onlooker it might have seemed that the ultimate disaster had befallen Jesus of Nazareth. But, although wicked men were guilty of what they did in bringing Him to the cross, all these events took place as the result of “the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of God”. He came so very low, even “to the dust of death”, in order that He might be the Rock on which sinners may rest their souls. He is a sure foundation for human beings facing an uncertain future, a future where the only real certainty is death. Those who build on that foundation cannot perish; eternal life is theirs. Nor need they be dismayed in the face of death, or any calamity in this life, for Christ has promised them: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5).

He will protect them and provide for them. Indeed the divine provision for them is unlimited, for “the meek shall inherit the earth” (Ps 37:11) – that is, in Matthew Henry’s words, “as much of it as infinite wisdom sees good for them; they have the ‘promise of the life that now is’ (1 Tim 4:8). If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it.”

Henry also makes two relevant points on verse 16 of the same Psalm: “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked”. (1) “The wealth of the world is so dispensed by the divine providence that it is often the lot of good people to have but a little of it, and of wicked people to have abundance of it; for thus God would show us that the things of this world are not the best things, for if they were, those would have most that are best and dearest to God”. (2) “A godly man’s little is really better than a wicked man’s much . . . for it comes from a better hand, from a hand of special love and not merely from the hand of common providence; it is enjoyed by a better title (God gives it to them by promise); it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the heir of all things; and it is put to a better use: it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God.”

The uncertainties we see in a sinful world around us should awaken us to our need for a rock which not only sounds strong but is in fact unfailingly strong. Such a rock is Christ – there is no other – whose resources are infinite and freely available to those who put their trust in Him. Another New Year should remind us of the passing of time and of how soon death, that one certainty in life, may sweep us away to another world. “Wherefore . . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb 12:1).

Faith's Victory over the World¹

A Sermon by *Archibald Alexander*

1 John 5:4. *And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

The conquest of the world may be considered the highest object of human ambition. In different ages, a few men have extended their conquests so far as to be called conquerors of the world. But if any man could literally gain possession of the whole world, it would be of little real value, and he would remain as unsatisfied as before. Indeed, it is reported of one who came as near dominion of the known world as any other that, when he had completed his conquests, he sat down and wept because there was no other world to conquer. All experience teaches that this world cannot be a satisfying portion to the immortal mind, which was made for far nobler enjoyments. It would therefore be a real benefit for mankind to be cured of their insatiable thirst after worldly possessions and have their attention directed to more excellent and more durable objects. This is the design of true religion, which it accomplishes, in some good degree, for all those who sincerely embrace it.

1. How the world opposes the Christian. We cannot renounce the world as a portion without incurring its displeasure. "If ye were of the world," Christ says, "the world would love his own; but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." And the opposition which exists between the spirit of the world and the spirit of true religion must produce a conflict; for Christians and men of the world not only mingle together in society, but are often connected by ties of kindred and relationship. Hence in all ages Christianity has been the occasion of enkindling flames of strife between members of the same household.

Although its natural tendency is to produce peace and good will among men; yet, agreeably to Christ's prediction, it has brought "a sword". "I am come," He said, "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." The world which lies in wickedness is at enmity with God. It is under the usurped authority of the prince of darkness, who is therefore called "the God of this world". Those therefore who come out from the world and imbibe a different spirit will be treated as deserters and will meet with persecution in one form or another. In this contest, if you count the apparent numbers, there are fearful odds in favour of the world and against the Christian soldier; but if your eyes should be opened, like those of the servant of the prophet, you will be ready to exclaim, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them". He

¹Reprinted, with editing, from Alexander's *Practical Sermons*.

who has enlisted under the banner of the Captain of salvation, may boldly say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The circumstances of this spiritual warfare vary very much with the state of the world and of each individual. Sometimes the battle is fierce, while at other times there appears to be a truce. This, however, is always a deceitful appearance; the enemy never really gives up his hostility. And if, because of the delusive appearance of peace, the Christian should ever suspend his vigilance and fall into the sleep of carnal security, he will be exposed to imminent danger; his spiritual welfare will be placed in the utmost peril.

The results of this contest make it the most important that was ever carried on in this world. It will therefore be worth our while to take a closer view of it and inquire how the world opposes the Christian, and how the Christian gains a victory over the world. A victory implies a conflict, and a conflict supposes an enemy. This enemy, as we have seen, is the world. In the sacred Scriptures, the word *world* is used in various senses. Here, it must be taken to signify that complex idea made up of the men of the world, with all their sentiments, maxims, plans and pursuits, and the things of the world, including every object which can, in any way, become a temptation or an obstacle to the Christian pilgrim in his progress to the land of promise.

The opposition of the world assumes two aspects of a very opposite nature and attempts to stop or retard the believer by addressing two different classes of feelings. The first is an aspect of terror. It presents to him a formidable array of evils which he must expect to meet in the Christian course. It attempts to alarm him by holding out the prospect of losses in things which are naturally desirable, of pains to be endured which are abhorrent to our nature. It does not merely threaten these evils, but actually inflicts them, in a truly appalling form.

Thus, when Christianity was first propagated in the world, it was met with the most determined and virulent opposition. Those professing it were dragged before the judgement seat of governors and kings. They were insulted and abused by the mob. They were "everywhere spoken against" and reputed to be "the offscouring of all things" – slandered not only as the enemies of the human race but as the enemies of the gods. They were beaten, scourged, imprisoned, tortured, thrown to the wild beasts in the theatre, and put to death by every species of torture which diabolical ingenuity could invent. And these scenes of persecution were not confined to one country or to one age. Wherever Christians were found, they were persecuted with unrelenting severity, and punished with death merely because they bore the Christian name. During the greater part of three centuries, these cruelties were practised against the unoffending followers of Christ. Tens of thousands, of every age

and of both sexes, were thus put to death, not accepting deliverance – when by uttering a single word, or by a single act of worship to the false deities of the heathen, they could have saved their lives.

This spirit of opposition to genuine Christianity has never been more malignant than when it has been exercised by those who professed the religion of Christ. No pagan cruelties could exceed those practised by the Spanish Inquisition. Infidels have sometimes charged all these upon Christianity itself; but this is most unjust, as the precepts and spirit of this religion are diametrically opposed to all cruelty and to all persecution on account of religion. When the world assumed the profession of Christianity, there was not generally a change of disposition with the change of name. The two contending parties still existed within the pale of the Church; and the spirit of the world is not less malign for being associated with hypocrisy. Christ's real sheep have ever been a little flock. The multitude, and especially those in power and authority, whatever name they may have assumed, have always been the enemies of the pure, spiritual religion of the gospel.

But the days of fierce and violent persecution have gone by² – we hope for ever. Even those who retain and cherish the spirit of persecution are ashamed to avow their true principles, and in this age they find their best policy is to profess liberality. But has the offence of the cross really ceased? Is the world no longer hostile to true religion? Far from it. The righteous are still hated by those whose deeds are evil. Those that are after the flesh are still disposed to persecute those that walk after the Spirit. There never can be a sincere peace between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. True godliness is still hated by the world, and those who live godly in Christ Jesus still suffer persecution. The spirit of the world is the same as formerly, but the mode of attack is changed. Or rather, the providence of God has put a restraint on the wicked, and they now pursue the righteous with weapons of scorn, ridicule and calumny. The war has not ended, and it will not cease as long as there is a world of carnal men.

There is, indeed, a fashionable kind of religion, against which the world feels no enmity – a religion which compromises with the world, connives at its vices and follies, and shuns all seriousness of spirit and strictness of behaviour. But this is, in fact, no other than the spirit of the world in disguise. Many professors of religion meet no opposition from the world, because they are of the world, and the world will love its own. And the men of the world, who are wiser in their generation than the children of light, are wise

²Even in Alexander's time, this statement may have been less than accurate, but with the spread of Christianity into other parts of the world, fresh waves of persecution arose. One thinks today, for instance, of persecution from Islam in many Middle-Eastern countries and from Communism in China and North Korea.

in discovering their friends, under whatever disguise they may appear. Indeed, false professors often manifest a more bitter enmity to true religion than the openly profane, so that there is no difficulty in discerning what manner of spirit they are of. Such have no contest with the world. Their controversy is with the genuine Christianity, which they are wont to malign as narrow, illiberal, bigoted, and hostile to human happiness. They pretend to have discovered an easier way to heaven than that old thorny path of self-denial and devotion, characterized by the example and precepts of Christ. Indeed they avoid the offence of the cross; they forsake no earthly honour or enjoyment for the kingdom of heaven.

But let anyone be in good earnest in matters of religion and be influenced by its truths in some proportion to their importance. Let him turn his affections away from the world and no longer seek his chief happiness in its riches, honours and pleasures. Let him turn his back on its fashionable entertainments and lead a life in conformity with the precepts of the gospel, however contrary to the fashions and maxims of the world. Then he will soon learn from experience that the world has not become a friend of genuine piety, and that it is still true that he who will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God. Parents often oppose their own children and do all they can to hinder them from becoming religious; husbands throw obstacles in the way of their wives, or wives in the way of their husbands. The old companions of the sincere convert soon show that their affections are alienated, and sometimes show their contempt clearly. He does not need a long time to learn that spiritual religion is no favourite with the men of this world.

The world does not always frown on religion; sometimes it insidiously smiles. The aspect of terror we were considering may produce dismay but then the danger is always manifest. But the time of trial comes when it comes forth with the language of friendship, when she pours forth her praise and heaps favours on the head of her intended victim, and when she tempts him to enjoy sensual pleasure. These temptations are more dangerous than fires and gibbets, and the danger is greater because it does not appear to be danger. No apprehensions are awakened. Prosperity and indulgence are naturally agreeable to everyone. When the senses are addressed by baits suited to them, and no gross sins are proposed, but merely a life of so-called innocent delights, the unsuspecting soul is thrown off her guard, and forgets to watch and pray against temptation. And before she is aware, she is ensnared in some forbidden indulgence, or is lulled into a sleep of carnal security.

The cup of worldly pleasure is always inebriating. It may be sweet to the taste, and exhilarating to the spirits, but its ultimate effects are harmful. The soul of the Christian is never in greater jeopardy than when all things around

are smiling. By the deceitfulness of riches, many high professors of religion have been brought low. While they hasted to be rich, they pierced themselves through with many sorrows, and fell into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. "The love of money is the root of all evil." Thus fell Judas, Ananias and Sapphira. Thus fell Demas, a companion of Paul, and a preacher of the gospel. Similarly, the honours of the world and the ambition for power and office have been a snare to many. They cannot believe, while they prefer the honour that comes from men to that from God. They who love the praise of men more than the praise of God will be ashamed of the gospel of Christ and will never confess His name before an ungodly and scoffing world.

But in no way does the world oppose the Christian more successfully than by alluring him with the prospect of ease and pleasure. On this enchanted ground many have slept, and many have slidden back and fallen, so that ever afterwards they have limped along, with broken bones. On this slippery ground, the "man after God's own heart" had a disgraceful fall, on account of which the mouths of the enemies of religion were opened to blaspheme and do so to this day. On this same deceitful ground, thousands of others have been overcome for a time and some have fallen to rise no more. At this point, the world is powerful, and the best of men, left to themselves, are weak. Indeed, few who have set their faces Zionward, have escaped unhurt in passing over this enchanted ground. Young Christians should take warning from the experience of those who have gone before them and not foolishly confide in their own wisdom and strength. But all should be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and never cease to watch and pray.

2. How the Christian gains the victory. The faith to which this victory is ascribed is not that historical or speculative faith which nearly all possess in Christian countries as a result of education. In its origin this faith does not differ from the faith of heathens and Moslems and is powerless in its effects. It never overcomes the world, for it is dead and unfruitful. The apostle is careful to let us know that he speaks of that faith which is the fruit of regenerating grace. In the verse from which our text is taken, he says, "Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world". None achieve this great victory but souls "born of God", for only they possess a true faith.

Some may allege that their faith is not the mere prejudice of education, but the result of a thorough and impartial examination of the evidences of divine revelation. But though their faith is founded on solid reasons, it comes far short of a saving faith. This faith requires no new birth to produce it; it is merely the offspring of man's reason. But how is it defective? If the reasons on which it is built are sound, what could be added to it? Yet we may have

convincing evidence of the truth of a thing, while this evidence does not present the object itself in its true light. Only by the Spirit illuminating the mind does it discern the true quality of spiritual objects. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Genuine faith is a full persuasion of the truth, produced by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for the rational mind to see an object to be lovely and not love it. Such a faith must therefore work by love, purify the heart and be fruitful of good works. This view of saving faith agrees with Paul's definition: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". It is the eye of the soul by which it looks into the spiritual world and presents future and eternal things as real. The Scriptures constantly testify that all ungodly men lack the true knowledge of God. They may perceive that God's Word is true, but they do not see its beauty and glory. So a blind man may be convinced of the existence of the sun by the testimony of others to its reality, but he can form no true idea of its glory.

There is a real distinction between merely intellectual ideas of divine things and those which are spiritual. The unregenerate man may be endowed with a powerful intellect and he may draw valid conclusions about divine truth; but he can never by the mere exercise of reason attain to spiritual ideas any more than the man born blind can become familiar with colours. The weakest Christian, even a child, can by the illumination of the Spirit, possess a species of knowledge which the philosopher can never reach by the utmost exertion of unassisted reason. And this knowledge is far better than that of any human science, however sublime or useful.

From this view of the nature of faith it will not be difficult to understand how it overcomes the world. To account for the power by which faith achieves this great victory, it will only be necessary to notice two principles. The first is that our estimation of the value of objects is always comparative. Children esteem nothing more valuable than their toys; but when they grow up, these trifles are now considered unworthy of a moment's thought.

Again, suppose that someone in an obscure position in life, whose mind has been occupied with small concerns, is suddenly presented with the prospect of great wealth and distinction. How quickly would his little cottage and his tools lose their former value! His mind would now be completely absorbed with more splendid objects. Similarly, objects infinitely more valuable than any which this world contains are presented by means of faith to the mind in their true character. Then the affections lose their hold of earthly things, and however strongly they were grasped, they are now willingly given up for the sake of those more excellent things which faith reveals to the soul.

With these objects fully in view, the glory of this world fades away and all its grandest objects appear trivial, and little worthy of the pursuit of a rational and immortal mind. To someone exercising faith, the riches, honours and pleasures of the world are like a child's toys to a mature man. He who is persuaded that an exceeding and eternal weight of glory is within his reach cannot be persuaded to give his affections to the things of this world.

For the sake of a heavenly inheritance, such a person will cheerfully part with an earthly portion. The world may frown upon him, may describe his new pursuit as folly, may follow him with its contempt, may try to conquer his resolution by every species of torture, but it cannot shake his purpose, much less change it. His language still is: "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed". Even though his enemies kill the body, his faith assures him that they cannot injure his better part. "Fear not them," says Christ, "that kill the body and have no more that they can do." Even while the body is on the rack, or in the flames, he sees by faith "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". He sees his gracious and almighty Redeemer holding out to him a crown of life. He is assured that, as soon as his soul leaves the body, it shall be with Christ in Paradise; and that there is in heaven reserved for him an inheritance among the saints in light, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. Is it strange then that, with these views which a genuine faith affords, the Christian should be a conqueror over the world, in all the hostile forms which it may assume?

The other principle to which I alluded is this: the true method of expelling one set of affections from the soul is to introduce others of a different nature and of greater strength. The soul of man must have one governing affection, to which all others must yield. It is on this principle that Christ said, "Ye cannot serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon". Suppose a devotee of sensual pleasure is suddenly seized with ambition or avarice, in a very high degree. The immediate effect on him would be to cease seeking happiness through indulging bodily passions; he would be led assiduously to pursue the new object, whether honour or wealth, for which he now entertains an affection of paramount strength. Such changes have sometimes been observed in human history.

But though changes of this kind are real and great, and are hailed by many as a great reformation, yet there is really no moral change. It is but the substitution of one vicious affection for another. But when faith comes into operation, and love to God becomes the predominant affection, there is not only a great change, but a moral transformation of the soul – from the sinful love of the creature to the holy love of the Creator. Now the world is conquered. Faith working by love has achieved the victory. The soul is restored

to something of its pristine order and beauty. Light has arisen out of darkness, and order out of confusion. Verily, there is "a new creation".

The believer can forsake not only riches and honours, but father and mother, wife and children, and life itself, for the honour of God his Saviour. In vain does the world attempt to turn him aside by its terrors and persecutions; by faith he triumphs over all the cruelties and indignities which it can heap upon him. And if it endeavours to draw him from his allegiance by spreading before him all her charms, her wealth, her honours and fascinating pleasures, they will all be spurned if faith is in lively exercise. Like Moses, the believer will prefer the cross of Christ to all the momentary pleasures of sin and to all the treasures of Egypt. This power of faith to conquer is not a vain boast but a practical reality. This victory has been achieved by multitudes, yea, by every true believer; and will continue to be achieved as long as the world stands.

Application: 1. If what has been said is true, we must conclude that genuine faith is rare in the world, even among professors. For when we take a survey of Christian nations, how few seem to have gained a victory over the world! The thirst for riches, honours and pleasures is almost universal. By earthly passions the great multitude are enslaved. Still the words of our Lord are applicable: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat"; while "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it". O professing Christian, let go your too eager grasp of the world, or it will sink you to ruin. Beware of covetousness, and remember that it is written that covetousness is idolatry, and the covetous shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. Flee from idolatry and seek the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2. Let not the poor and afflicted in this world, who believe in Christ, be discouraged. You, my brethren, are placed in circumstances which are most favourable to a victory over the world. Those attractive temptations, which have ensnared and ruined so many professors, are removed far from you. You should not repine at your poverty, for riches might have proved ruinous to your souls. And you who endure severe affliction, bear it with patience. And even be thankful for it, because "our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". Soon all sense of pain shall cease for ever, and all our feelings of sorrow shall be swallowed up in never-ending happiness. "Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life." Henceforth there is laid up for you a crown of life, which God the righteous Judge will give you at that day. "Be thou faithful unto death," says the Lord, "and I will give you a crown of life."

Richard Baxter¹

1. Early Life

Baxter was born in a Shropshire village in 1615. It was a district with “little preaching at all”, he complains in his *Autobiography*.² “In the village where I was born there were [in the church] four readers successively in six years’ time, ignorant men, and two of them immoral, who were all my schoolmasters.” “Only three or four constant competent preachers lived near us . . . and any that had but gone to hear them, when he had no preaching at home, was made the derision of the vulgar rabble under the odious name of a Puritan.”³

However, Baxter’s father, also Richard, was converted through reading the Scriptures. “And God made him,” his son adds, “the instrument of my first convictions.” And he tells us that, when he was about 15, “it pleased God to awaken my soul”, through reading an old torn book commonly called Bunny’s *Resolution* (oddly enough this was written by Robert Parsons, a Jesuit, but revised by the Calvinist, Edmund Bunny). “And about that time,” Baxter goes on, “it pleased God that a poor pedlar came to the door that had ballads and some good books, and my father bought of him Dr Sibbes’ *Bruised Reed*. This also I read, and found it suited to my state and seasonably sent me.”⁴

When Baxter was ready for university he was advised to go instead to Ludlow to be tutored by a friend of his schoolmaster, but the friend proved altogether inadequate for the task. The would-be student had missed his chance of a university education, and beyond this stage in his life he was almost entirely self-taught. He was soon immersed in the writings of the theologians of the Middle Ages, such as Thomas Aquinas. Clearly the books of the Reformers and the earlier Puritans would have been much more profitable to him, and to have focused on them at this stage in his intellectual development might have given him a more solid doctrinal foundation, and this might have saved him from some of the errors of his later life. But the direction of his reading no doubt suffered from the lack of a wise guide.

Yet he must, later if not sooner, have included the Puritans in his literary diet because, in giving reasons for his doubts about his own salvation, he refers to his inability to trace clearly the workings of the Holy Spirit on his heart in the way that men such as Bolton, Hooker and Rogers had described;

¹This is the first part of a paper delivered at the 2008 Theological Conference.

²Everyman edition, edited by J M Lloyd Thomas, 1931, p 3.

³*Autobiography*, p 4.

⁴*Autobiography*, p 7.

nor could he pinpoint the time of his conversion. He was also discouraged by “the hardness of my heart” and the lack of “such lively apprehensions of things spiritual which I had about things corporal”. But in response to these latter difficulties he came to realise that, while still in the body, “things spiritual and distant” are not so apt to influence the soul as the things that can touch the bodily senses. “And”, he states further, “I found that my hearty love of the Word of God and of the servants of God, and my desires to be more holy, and especially the hatred of my heart for loving God no more, and my love to love Him and be pleasing to Him, was not without some love to Himself. . . . But I understood at last that God breaketh not all men’s hearts alike.”⁵

In 1638 Baxter was ordained a deacon in the Church of England, by the Bishop of Worcester, but there is no evidence that he ever received full ordination.⁶ Baxter is most associated with the town of Kidderminster, to whose parish church he was invited in March 1641 with a view to becoming “preacher or lecturer” there. He found the prospect attractive as he would be preaching to “an ignorant, rude and revelling people for the greater part, who had need of preaching, and yet had among them a small company of converted, who were humble, godly . . . but above all, because they had hardly ever had any lively, serious preaching among them”; so they had not “been hardened in unprofitableness under an awakening ministry”.

It was the place, he wrote, “which had the chiefest of my labours and yielded me the greatest fruits of comfort. . . . Whilst I continued at Kidderminster it pleased God to get me much encouragement by the success of my weak but hearty labours.”⁷ At this time his health was not good; his weaknesses, he said, “were so great as made me live and preach in some continual expectation of death, supposing still that I had not long to live. And this I found through all my life to be an invaluable mercy to me, for . . . it made me study and preach things necessary, and a little stirred up my sluggish heart to speak to sinners with some compassion as a dying man to dying men.”⁸

As a result of the troubles then breaking out between King Charles I and the English Parliament, Baxter’s position in Kidderminster became more than a little difficult. Indeed at one point his life was in danger and he left the town for Gloucester, later settling in Coventry. It is said that, while there, he told a magistrate who had come to arrest him that he was a “man catcher” and persuaded him to go with him to a nearby village. There Baxter prayed

⁵*Autobiography*, pp 10,11.

⁶Though Geoffrey F Nuttall argues in his *Richard Baxter* (Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965, p 18) that “we may suppose that he was ordained priest . . . in 1641”.

⁷*Autobiography*, p 25.

⁸*Autobiography*, p 26.

with such “seriousness and fervour” that the magistrate “was soon melted into tears”.⁹

In 1645 he became a chaplain in the parliamentary army. Constitutionally Baxter was a supporter of the monarchy, but, he says, “I had great reason to believe that if the King had conquered the Parliament, the nation had lost all security of their liberties, and been at his mercy”.¹⁰ His time in the army was not a particularly happy period of his life; he was disturbed by the increasing influence of the Independents and the Baptists, and even more so by the influence of the Sectaries. He was also upset by those in the army who took upon themselves to organise churches without being ordained. But his forcefulness in opposing these various parties did not sit very comfortably with the principles which he believed applied to all his activity: “Unity in things necessary and liberty in things unnecessary and charity in all”.

His relations with Cromwell, an Independent in Church polity, were never warm. Indeed a sermon preached before Cromwell some years later, against the divisions and distractions of the Church “was not well received”. Cromwell sent for him and they had long conversations together. Baxter stated that he “dealt so plainly with” Cromwell “as cast him into. . . passion”, and adds: “I saw that what he learned must be from himself”. G F Nuttall describes it as “a shrewd comment”, and no doubt Nuttall’s own further point is just as shrewd: “But Cromwell might have said it of Baxter with equal truth”.¹¹

But the state of his health forced him to leave the army. Feeling eternity to be close, he at this time began what became perhaps his most famous book, *The Saint’s Everlasting Rest*. For much of his adult life he suffered from ill-health; some of his symptoms point to stomach ulcers, others to consumption. On a number of occasions he was so unwell that he believed he had only a short time to live and he was rarely free from pain.

After some degree of recovery from the ill-health which drove him out of the army he returned to Kidderminster, where *The Saint’s Everlasting Rest* was completed. Under Baxter’s ministry, an attentive congregation generally filled the church, and it became necessary to build five galleries because of the crowds who came. He summed up the effects of his diligent care for the people there: “When I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on His name”; “when I came away there were some streets where there was not past one family in the side of a street that did not so”. And he added: “On the Lord’s Days there was no disorder to be seen in the streets, but you might hear a hundred families

⁹Quoted in Nuttall, p 33.

¹⁰Quoted in Hugh Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter*, SCM Press, 1954, p 38.

¹¹Nuttall, p 80.

singing Psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through the streets”.¹²

He himself stated: “I confess that harmony and melody are the pleasure and elevation of my soul and have made a Psalm of praise in the holy assembly the chief delightful exercise of my religion and my life”. But in what he called his “weak judgement” he stated: “It would be no sinful human invention or addition . . . if hymns and psalms of praise were new invented, as fit for the state of the gospel Church and worship . . . as David’s psalms were fitted to the former state and infancy of the Church”,¹³ evidence that Baxter’s judgement in ecclesiastical matters was indeed rather weak.

Yet Baxter’s pastoral care is legendary. He wrote *The Reformed Pastor* to encourage others to diligence in their ministerial duties, a book which arose out of an address he prepared for a ministers’ conference. He told his colleagues: “O sirs, surely if you had all conversed with neighbour Death as oft as I have done, and as often received the sentence [of death] in yourselves, you would have an unquiet conscience, if not a reformed life, as to your ministerial diligence and fidelity”.¹⁴ Baxter was most certainly not throwing stones in a glasshouse. He set apart two days a week for pastoral work with the families in his congregation, along with his assistant – 14 families each, for an hour apiece. The assistant visited those outside the town in their own houses; families within the town came to the ministers’ homes. First they recited the *Shorter Catechism*; then Baxter explained it to them, before going on to question them about the state of their souls and giving them what he believed to be appropriate advice. Amazingly, only three or four families refused to come.

His output of books was enormous – 141 titles in total, some huge, others much smaller. If we take John Owen’s 24 volumes as a comparison, Baxter’s writings would occupy more than 50 of a similar size. Referring to his younger years, he makes the confession: “I was very apt to start up controversies”.¹⁵ His further comment cannot be questioned: “Concerning all my writings I must confess that my own judgement is that fewer, well-studied and polished, had been better”;¹⁶ and no doubt it has been a distinct advantage to readers to have Baxter’s books generally reprinted in abridged editions. Even his practical writings on their own fill four massive volumes, with around 1000 pages each; these were reprinted in the late twentieth century, but amidst

¹²Quoted in Nuttall, p 47.

¹³Quoted in Nuttall, pp 51,52.

¹⁴Quoted in the Introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*, Banner of Truth edition, p 17.

¹⁵*Autobiography*, p 105. However, Nuttall points out: “His later practice . . . hardly bears this out: the pieces he published during the 1680s are predominantly controversial” (p 119).

¹⁶*Autobiography*, p 102.

much useful material, they contain “objectionable statements”.¹⁷ His more theological volumes, overly long and uneven in the scripturalness of their doctrine, have never been reprinted since they were first published, and it is questionable how much they were read even then.

The Burnt Offering¹

Henry Law

Leviticus 1:17. *It is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.*

You are invited here to take your stand within the tabernacle’s court. A crowded and a busy scene appears. Many worshippers bring many offerings. All is activity. But all the active zeal has one great object – to honour God in God’s appointed way.

Each offering in this court is a full page of gospel truth. Christ in His grace and work is the golden key to open every part. Leviticus is Calvary foreshown. Calvary is Leviticus unfolded. The one casts forward the morning ray. The other pours down the midday blaze. But the early and the brighter beams stream from one Sun – Christ Jesus. The brazen altar is the herald of the cross. The cross re-echoes to the brazen altar’s voice.

In a long train of ceremonial teaching the burnt offering takes the lead. Let this then first be noticed. An offerer comes. Mark what he brings. If his offering be from the herd, it must be an unblemished male (Lev 1:3). It must be the choicest produce from his pastures – the primest flower from his fields. There must be strength in fullest vigour, and beauty without one alloy. Such are the properties required.

The meaning is distinct. Jesus is here. The victim chosen before worlds were framed is thus portrayed. Strength and perfection are main colours in His portrait. He is strong as God can be. The buckler of omnipotence is on His arm. The girdle of His loins is might of might. Hence He is able to achieve the grandest of all victories – even to tread down Satan and his empire. Hence He is able to bear away the weightiest of all burdens – even the vast mass of all His people’s sins.

Perfection finds embodiment in Him. His every aspect is beauty, without one flaw. All evil tried Him but it left no stain. Sin could not touch Him, though He sojourned in its home. Earth saw in Him one sinless

¹⁷The expression comes from Iain H Murray, “Richard Baxter – ‘The Reluctant Puritan’?”, in *Advancing in Adversity*, Westminster Conference papers for 1991, p 23.

¹Taken, with slight editing, from Law’s *The Gospel in Leviticus*.

inhabitant. From the manger to the cross, He shone one ray of godlike purity.

O my soul, you need strong help. Repose on Jesus; His strength suffices, and it cannot fail. You need a perfect ransom and a perfect robe. Repose on Jesus; He gave to God a spotless life, a spotless soul, to be the sinner's price. He gives to you a spotless righteousness to be your raiment. Thus the unblemished male pictures the beautiful and the strong Redeemer.

We next approach the chambers of the offerer's heart. We read, "He shall offer it of his own voluntary will" (Lev 1:3). There is no compulsion. There is no reluctance. His step is willingness. This is a picture of faith's happy actings. Its chariot wheels move swiftly. It feels sin's miserable need. It knows the value of redeeming blood. So it flies, with rapid wing, to plead it at the mercy seat. Formalists may frequent God's courts. Habit's cold chains may drag them. Self-righteousness may urge them to the heartless task. But faith is a willing grace.

The eager offerer puts his hand upon the victim's head (Lev 1:4). Do any ask the meaning of this rite? It graphically shows a transfer. Some load oppresses, which is thus cast off. Some burden passes to another's person. Here is again the happy work of faith. It brings all guilt and heaps it on the Saviour's head. One sin retained is misery now and hell at last. All must be pardoned by being brought to Christ. And He is waiting to receive. His office is to be this burden-bearer. His love constrains and He cannot draw back.

Do any read this who never have thus dealt with Christ? Where are your sins? They adhere tighter than your very skin. They have a millstone's weight. They press to misery's unfathomable depths. But flee to Jesus. He can remove them all, and He alone.

Believer, where are your sins? On Jesus they are placed, and you are free. I ask again, Where are your sins? You answer, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps 103:12). You may rejoice and sing aloud, Christ is accepted for me; I shall not be condemned. Thus with one hand faith casts away all misery, and with the other grasps all joy.

The victim, to which sins thus typically pass, must die. "He shall kill the bullock before the Lord" (Lev 1:5). Can Jesus, who in reality receives the guilt, fail to lay down His life? It cannot be. The holy word stands sure: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:17). The sinner's surety then cannot be spared. He gives His life to pay the debt, to satisfy the wrath, to bear the curse, to expiate the guilt.

O my soul, "Christ died" is all your hope, your plea, your remedy, your life. "Christ died" opens your path to God. "Christ died" turns every frown into approving smiles. When the law thunders and conscience quakes and

Satan accuses, interpose, “Christ died”, and fear no more. When the grave opens, whisper, “Christ died”, and sleep in peace. When the white throne is set, shout, “Christ died”, and take the crown of righteousness.

The victim’s blood is sprinkled “round about upon the altar” (Lev 1:5). The blood is evidence that life is paid. This token then is profusely scattered. The priestly hands bedewed the altar with it. Thus Jesus enters with His own blood into the holy place (Heb 9:12). He strews it round and claims the purchased flock, the covenanted blessings, full reward, the fruit of His completed work. O my soul, you are bought and cleansed and comforted by blood. Your every blessing is a blood-bought gift. Let every prayer and praise and work and service be a blood-sprinkled offering.

The victim is next flayed (Lev 1:6). The skin is torn away. The sacrificing priest received this as his portion. It gave supplies of raiment. Is there no gospel here? say you who joy in Jesus as the Lord your righteousness. Yes, here is a picture of that heaven-pure robe in which Christ decks each child of faith. His blood indeed removes all their curse. But it is obedience which merits their glory. Because He died, they live. Because He lived, they reign.

The piercing knife divides the limbs. Members are torn from members, and all the parts, without, within, to which defilement usually adheres are diligently washed (Lev 1:9). The type of Jesus must be clean. No shadow of impurity may darken it. Again and again the truth resounds, that God’s eye can only rest on perfect purity. How then shall the sinner stand who ventures near apart from Christ? Consider this before it is too late; never rest until you know that you are cleansed without by cleansing blood, and cleansed within by sanctifying grace.

The parts thus severed and thus washed are placed upon the altar. Consuming fire is brought. It preys on every limb. The raging flame devours until this fuel is reduced to ashes (Lev 1:9). Let us now seek the truth which echoes from this blazing pile. The garden and the cross unfold it. There Jesus presents Himself, laden with all the sins of all His chosen race. O my soul, have you an interest in Him? If it be so, He there appears bearing the guilt of all your guilty life. The sinless is accounted sinful, that the sinful may be spared as sinless.

What then occurs? Sin merits wrath. This wrath must fall. Justice must claim its due. Truth must be true. Holiness must show how evil is abhorred. The majesty and honour of God’s empire cannot descend from their high throne. Sinner, be sure that sin cannot be spared. You must take woe, except this Surety take it for you.

What then occurs? See Jesus crushed to the earth beneath the load of anguish. Each bleeding pore proclaims that more cannot be borne. But whence

is the God-man's mighty agony? The fire of heaven's wrath has fallen on Him. Vengeance has seized its prey. He undergoes the every pang which would have tortured His redeemed if they had tossed in hottest flames for ever. The fire burns – the anger rages – until each sin has infinitely suffered what it infinitely earned. No fuel then remains. All is consumed. The fire dies. The wrath expires. Hark, Jesus utters the wondrous word, "It is finished!"

O my soul, in calm and holy reverence, survey this awful scene. It is your ransom. It is your escape. It is your rescue from eternal ruin. It is Another draining hell's cup for you. This one burnt offering receives all vengeance. The fire that died in Christ cannot revive to injure you.

The Spirit seals the record with this approving seal: "It is a burnt offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord" (Lev 1:9). Here is witness worth ten thousand worlds. Here is the sweetest cordial which lips of faith can drink. The dying Jesus is heaven's "sweet savour". When the God-man victim burns upon the altar of the cross, each attribute is satisfied; nay more, exults with ever-exulting joy; nay more, is magnified to the highest heights; nay more, is glorified till glory overflows.

Reader, the type blazes to win you to the saving cross. Whatever be your state or grade, be wise and seek your richest pleasures here. The rite distinctly shows that rich and poor alike need pardon and alike must come. Sin has soiled all. All then must wash in expiating blood. The wealthy brought their victim from the herd. He who had less of worldly wealth offered his lamb or kid. The poorest inmate of the poorest hut gave the young pigeon or the turtle dove. All placed upon the altar a burnt sacrifice. A Saviour is the one need of rich and poor. The richest is most poor till Christ be found. The poorest is most rich when once this pearl be clasped.

Such is the gospel of the burnt offering. Do not leave it without three solemn thoughts written deep in your heart.

1. Fire there burns. It burns to tell us what is sin's due. It frightfully portrays what all on whom the plague abides must bear. Look at the consuming blaze and meditate on the tossings on a fiery lake, the flames which cannot die, the gnawings of the ever-gnawing worm, the raging of relentless wrath, the agony which tortures mind and soul and body. See in this sight God's utmost power put forth to inflict utmost pains through endless ages. See sin's sure doom. May the sight drive you rapidly to Christ!

2. Mark here God's wondrous grace. To save lost souls He gives the Son of His love to the fury of His wrath. He heaps all woe on Him, so that no woe may remain for the redeemed. His frown is pitiless towards Him, so that He may smile unceasingly on them. How dear they must be to His heart! He who is the preciousness of heaven descends to bear the worst of their vile

doom. The burnt offering sweetly cries, Abundant grace exceeds abundant sin.

3. What shall the ransomed render to salvation's Lord? The burnt offering demands from them self-offering. Let all heaven hear, let all earth take knowledge that they give themselves, their souls, their bodies, their every faculty and gift, all influence, all means, their morning, midday and evening hours, to be a free-will sacrifice to free grace. Let the high altar of self-consecrating gratitude be raised. Let the whole life be one clear blaze of flaming love and ever-brightening service.

The Sacrament of Baptism

2. Some Questions to Parents

W K Tweedie

We would now suggest some questions to parents, to guide them to a sound judgement on their position in relation to baptism and their children. You have sought the *outward ordinance*, but have you prayed and watched for the *inward blessings*? You have sought the *seal*, but have you also sought and prayed for the *things sealed*? You have obtained the *sign*, but have you longed as anxiously for the *thing signified*? You would have felt yourselves aggrieved had you been denied the outward rite for your little ones, but have you been as resolutely bent on seeking for the renewing grace and the cleansing blood of the Saviour to be applied by the Spirit to their souls?

You have dedicated your children to God – to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost – but have you reared, and are you rearing, them for Him? He is, by profession, their Saviour; do you train them to receive and rest upon Him exclusively and alone? He is their Sanctifier; do you teach them that unless they be renewed by the Spirit and made holy as Christ was holy, they can never see God? You have vowed to set before your children a Christian example; have they reason to believe that you have been with Jesus? You have vowed to maintain the worship of God in your family; do the morning and evening sacrifices ascend from the family altar, as in the temple of old? You have declared with all the solemnity of an oath, before God and man, that you plan to bring up your little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; is His Word then your guide, your counsellor and light?

Have the maxims of the world been discarded? Are the maxims of Scripture at once your rule and your child's? If these things are neglected, while we are under vows to be guided by them, is the ostrich not the emblem of our condition – “which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast

may break them?” (Job 39:14,15). But if these things are attended to in the spirit of prayer and in dependence upon God, we may expect His promised blessing in the use of His appointed means.

No doubt our children may go astray in spite of all our painstaking and prayers; and it has happened that the grey hairs even of godly parents have been brought in sorrow to the grave by the waywardness of unconverted youth. Jehovah is sovereign, and the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. None are so exceedingly guilty as they who live in sin under the preaching of the gospel and the enjoyment of spiritual privileges; and none are so hardened in sin, so “desperately wicked”, as the child of many prayers, when he tramples on his father’s warnings or despises his mother’s tears. But still, amid all that is mysterious or sorely trying in this, let it be ours to discharge duty – to use means, to wait in faith and cherish hope. And if our bread is cast upon the waters, we shall find it after many days. It may be given to us to see – if not here, at least from our home in glory – the fulfilment of the promise that there shall be a seed to serve Him while sun and moon endure.

Riches (1)¹

***H*ow to handle affluence.** Commenting on Psalm 62:10, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them”, C H Spurgeon said, “If they grow in an honest, providential manner, as the result of industry or commercial success, do not make much account of the circumstance; do not be unduly elated; do not fix your love upon money bags. To bow an immortal spirit to the constant contemplation of fading possessions is extreme folly. Shall those who call the Lord their glory, glory in yellow earth? Shall the image of Caesar deprive them of communion with Him who is the image of the invisible God? As we must not rest in men, so neither must we repose in money.”

On the same text Christopher Love² writes about the deceitfulness of riches: “Riches have in them uncertainty and deceitfulness. Riches have never been true to those that trusted in them, but ever have proved ‘a lie in their right hand’ (Is 44:20). Hence they are called ‘lying vanities’ (Jonah 2:8) and compared to a flock of birds sitting upon a man’s ground which, upon the least fright, take wing and fly away. Riches have ‘wings’, saith Solomon; and rather than want they will “make to themselves wings” (Prov 23:5) This is a sore deceit . . . yet your heart is more deceitful, inasmuch as it will

¹Another series of excerpts from the writings of eminent Christians compiled by Peter Best.

²Love (1618-1651) was a Welshman who became a Presbyterian preacher in London.

deceive you with these deceitful riches; they are so because the heart is so.” ***A Christian disposition towards material things.*** On Proverbs 30:8, “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me”, Charles Bridges³ comments: “How fraught with instruction is Agur’s prayer! All are ready to pray against poverty. But to deprecate riches – this is not nature’s desire, but an impulse of godly fear and trembling, that comes from above. ‘Give me not riches’, is scarce the prayer of one in ten thousand. Agur, as a wise man, desired the safest and happiest lot – not, as Israel of old, meat for his lust; but food convenient for him, measured out in daily allowance, suitable to his need. . . . Agur was well persuaded of the temptations incident to these two opposite conditions – the vanity and lies belonging to riches (Ps 62:9), the discontent and occasion of sin, which are the snares of poverty . . . he cries for deliverance from the snares of each condition: Let me not be rich, lest I be full and deny thee. Let me not be poor, lest I steal and take the name of God in vain. . . .

“We must however be careful that we use Agur’s prayer in his spirit. Perhaps the gospel rather teaches us to leave the matter entirely with God. Both riches and poverty are His appointment. It may please Him to place us in a high condition, to entrust us with much riches, or to exercise us with the trials of poverty. Many of His children are in both these conditions. And shall they wish it otherwise? Let them rather seek for grace to glorify Him in either state. Or if it seem lawful to pray for a change of condition, let us not forget to pray for a single eye to His glory, that His will, not ours, may be done in us. ‘Whatsoever God gives,’ said the pious Bishop Hall, ‘I am both thankful and indifferent, if while I am rich in estate, I may be poor in spirit, and while I am poor in estate, I may be rich in grace.’”

Warnings to the rich. “Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Matt 19:23-26).

J C Ryle⁴ wrote on this passage: “Few of our Lord’s sayings sound more startling than this; few run more counter to the opinions and prejudices of mankind; few are so little believed. Yet this saying is true and worthy of all acceptation. Riches, which all desire to obtain; riches, for which men labour and toil and become grey before their time; riches are the most perilous

³Bridges (1794-1869) was an Evangelical preacher in the Church of England.

⁴Ryle (1816-1900) was an Evangelical preacher and first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool.

possession. They often inflict great injury on the soul; they lead men into many temptations; they bind heavy burdens on the heart and make the way to heaven even more difficult than it naturally is.

“Let us beware of the love of money. It is possible to use it well and do good with it; but for one who makes a right use of money there are thousands who make a wrong use of it and do harm both to themselves and others. Let the worldly man, if he will, make an idol of money and count him happiest who has most of it; but let the Christian, who professes to have ‘treasure in heaven’, set his face, like a flint, against the spirit of the world in this matter. Let him not worship gold. He is not the best man in God’s eyes who has most money, but he who has most grace.

“Let us pray daily for rich men’s souls. They are not to be envied; they are deeply to be pitied. They carry heavy weights in the Christian course; they are of all men the least likely so to run as to obtain’ (1 Cor 9:24). Their prosperity in this world is often their destruction in the world to come. Well may the Litany of the Church of England contain the words, ‘In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us’.

“The second thing that we learn in this passage is the almighty power of God’s grace in the soul. The disciples were amazed when they heard our Lord’s language about rich men. It was language so entirely contrary to all their notions about the advantages of wealth that they cried out with surprise, ‘Who then can be saved?’ They drew from our Lord a gracious answer: ‘With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible’. The Holy Ghost can incline even the richest of men to seek riches in heaven. He can dispose even kings to cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus and to count all things but loss for the sake of the kingdom of God. Proof upon proof of this is given to us in the Bible. Abraham was very rich, yet he was the father of the faithful. Moses might have been a prince or king in Egypt, but he forsook all his brilliant prospects for the sake of Him who is invisible. Job was the wealthiest man in the East, yet he was a chosen servant of God. David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah were all wealthy monarchs, but they loved God’s favour more than their earthly greatness. They all show us that ‘nothing is too hard for the Lord’ and that faith can grow even in the most unlikely soil.

“Let us hold fast this doctrine, and never let it go. No man’s place or circumstances shut him out from the Kingdom of God; let us never despair of anyone’s salvation. No doubt rich people require special grace and are exposed to special temptations. But the Lord God of Abraham and Moses and Job and David is not changed. He who saved them in spite of their riches can save others also. When He works, who shall let it? (Is 43:13).”

A Call to Repentance¹

John Colquhoun

If any of my readers has not yet repented of his innumerable and aggravated sins, I must, before I take my leave of him, again exhort and beseech him to repent without delay. The great and terrible God commands you, in the most peremptory manner, to repent of all your transgressions of His holy law. He “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30,31). Here the Apostle Paul declares that God commands all men to repent. And the powerful motive by which he enforces obedience to the divine command is this: God “hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained”.

Believe then and consider the certainty of that great and terrible day. By raising Christ from the dead, God has given assurance of that day to all men; and therefore, if any man still doubts of the judgement to come, it will be at his peril. The God of truth has not only said, but sworn, that there shall be a day of judgement. “We shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom 14:10,11). At that awful day, the Lord Jesus will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, in the glory of His Father, and with His holy angels.

At His coming as the Judge of quick and dead, all the sons and daughters of Adam shall, by the sound of the last trumpet, be summoned to appear before His tribunal. The sound of this trumpet will be so loud as, not only to be heard at once in all places of the earth and all depths of the sea, but to awaken all who sleep in the dust and raise them from death. Then the righteous and omniscient Judge “shall sit on the throne of His glory,” His “great white throne” (Rev 20:11), that throne which, as Daniel says, will be “like the fiery flame” (Dan 7:9). His throne of judgement shall not only be a great throne, but white and fiery – white as the snow and fiery as the flame; white, because no judgement shall proceed from it but what will be most pure and impartial; and fiery, for it will be inexpressibly terrible to every one who lives and dies impenitent.

Reflect seriously, O impenitent sinner, that after your hardness and impenitent heart, you are treasuring up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath

¹The conclusion, slightly edited, of Colquhoun’s valuable book on *Repentance*. He was a minister in Leith from 1781 to 1826, the year in which this work was first published.

and revelation of the righteous judgement of God. If death will surprise you in your impenitence, the righteous Judge in that day will, with terrible majesty and the most appalling frown, pronounce on you and all the impenitent this tremendous sentence: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41). Dreadful doom! To be sentenced to dwell in fire – in fire prepared for the devil and his angels, in everlasting fire – how horrible, how amazing! To be damned by Him who came to save sinners from sin and hell must be double damnation. But thus it shall be. The Lamb of God shall, in that awful day, roar as a lion against you and, by an irreversible sentence from the throne, adjudge you to the most intense and direful torment, and to the society of devils for ever and ever. No sooner shall the sentence be passed than it shall be executed: “These shall go away into everlasting punishment” (Matt 25:46).

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord”, I earnestly entreat you to return by true repentance to the God of all grace. O be persuaded, while it is called today, to repent and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?” (Ezek 33:11) “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil” (Joel 2:12,13). O comply with these compassionate, and tender invitations!

And if you would return to the Lord by true repentance, believe in order to repent. Believe, with application to yourself, the commands and curses of the law as a violated covenant of works, in order to obtain true conviction of your sin and misery. And then believe, with particular application, the declarations, offers and promises of the blessed gospel, in order to obtain such a view by faith of the mercy of God in Christ as will dispose and encourage you to exercise that evangelical repentance which will be acceptable to Him. Trust in the Redeemer, that exalted Prince and Saviour, for repentance unto life; and pray in His name to the God of all grace for “the Spirit of grace and of supplications”, to enable you to look upon Him whom you have pierced, and to mourn for Him.

[God] said unto Jacob, when he was going down into Egypt, “Fear not to go down into Egypt; for . . . I will go down with thee . . . and I will also surely bring thee up again”; so He saith to His languishing and dying servants, “Fear not to go down into the dark and silent grave, for I will go down with you and will also bring you up again”.

Andrew Gray

The Effect of Embracing the Promise¹

Lachlan Mackenzie

The people of God escape the pollution that is in the world through lust. Before the prodigal returned to his father's house, he longed for the husks the swine did eat; but after he was re-admitted to his father's table, he did not envy them any longer. The reason why people have such a relish for the pleasures of the world is that they do not taste the sweetness of the promises.

Moses had it in his power to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and enjoy the benefit of his adoption. He might enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. But he saw more in the promises made to the people of God. Abraham, at the call of God, left the land of his nativity and came to the land of Canaan to sojourn there. He received it in a promise as a type of heaven. He did not seek his ultimate happiness in the land of Canaan, for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Now, what kept such holy men from plunging into all the irregularities they saw in the world around them? It arose from this: they embraced the promises as their portion and believed firmly in that future state of happiness which is reserved for the people of God. The world around them might look upon them as a set of well-meaning enthusiasts; the purity of their conduct and the holiness of their lives they could not call in question. But the world would consider their happiness as rather visionary when they spoke of a kingdom and country to be enjoyed after death. They would consider Abraham, the father of the faithful, as a person who had a religious craze when he made himself believe that an old woman, long past child bearing, would have a child, and that the children to spring from this son were to inherit Canaan. His view of a future state, in their opinion, might be as ideal as the notion of his children by Sarah possessing all the country from the Mediterranean Sea to the River Euphrates. Their principle was, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"; and they acted accordingly.

If people who have the benefit of revelation live like brutes, is it a surprise that blind heathens should abandon themselves to all sorts of debauchery? And what hinders the people of God from following the example of infidel Christians? They believe the promises, and thus escape the pollution of lust. The victory that overcomes the world is their faith; it shows them the glory of heaven, the grace and power of Christ, and the danger of yielding to the foe.

¹This is the third head of a sermon on 2 Peter 1:4, by the noted minister of Lochcarron (1754-1819). It is taken with slight editing from the volume, *The Happy Man*. Earlier heads were: (1) The exceeding greatness and preciousness of the promises. (2) The character of the children of the promises – they are partakers of the divine nature.

Notes and Comments

Scotland's Falling Birth Rate

Women in Scotland have fewer children than those in other parts of the UK. So says a report by academics from five Scottish universities who carried out research for the Scottish Government and the Economic and Social Research Council. They indicate that the birth rate in Scotland is below what is needed to replace the population, and predict that by 2017 the country's population may fall below five million for the first time since the 1940s. Consequently there is concern about the adverse effects this would have on the Scottish economy, the provision of services and the labour market.

According to the report, the reasons behind the lower birth rate could include higher levels of deprivation, job commitments and money worries. But we find it surprising that abortion is omitted from this list. Since the Abortion Act was passed 40 years ago, more than 300 000 unborn children have been killed in Scotland for purely social reasons.

The report suggests that there will be a continued need for immigrants, yet large numbers of babies continue to be killed in the womb each year – 13 081 in 2006. What wisdom is in us when we destroy so many unborn human beings – the fundamental resource of society? But more serious is the fact that the inhumane practice of social abortion deprives us of the blessing God promises to those to obey Him and incurs His holy displeasure for transgressing His commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”. NMR

Proposed Legislation Against “Hatred”

At the end of 2007, the Government published its proposed legislation against “hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation”, in the form of amendments to the present legislation against “religious hatred”. The resulting document is deeply disturbing in a number of respects.

One objection is that it would tend to *silence the righteous condemnation of evil*. If the legislation were strictly understood, it would be entirely harmless because its stated purpose is to prohibit the “stirring up” of certain forms of “hatred”. God has already forbidden us to hate our fellow-men: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart” (Lev 19:17). No Christian, therefore, is worried about laws prohibiting hatred, provided these are fairly interpreted. But we know, in the present climate, that the proposed amendments are intended, by some at least, to stifle criticism of homosexuals, and that they are very likely to be unfairly interpreted to that end. Furthermore, while it is true that God forbids us to hate our fellow-men, it is also true that He requires us to make a distinction between those who are evil and those who

are godly. The man who will “dwell in God’s holy hill” is the one “in whose eyes a vile person is contemned (or despised); but he honoureth them that fear the Lord” (Ps 15:1,4). Enemies of Christianity will be all too ready to brand a holy condemnation of homosexuality as “hatred”.

A second objection is that it would be *unfair*. It violates, in a subtle way, the fundamental principle that all men should be equal in the eyes of the law: “Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the Lord your God” (Lev 24:22). The proposed legislation singles out a certain form of hatred as more harmful than any other, and thereby grants to the potential victims of this hatred an elevated status in law. The implication is that it is worse to injure them than anyone else. Under the proposed legislation, Lot might well be convicted for saying “I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly”; while the Sodomites, inciting hatred on other grounds by saying “This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge”, would get off scot-free (Gen 19:7,9).

A third objection is that it would *complete the utter overturning of morality*. Homosexual conduct is *evil*, and here we have proposed legislation to protect evil-doers when there is no legislation whatever to prohibit and punish their evil-doing. Doubtless there is a place for protective legislation to ensure that even criminals are not mistreated. But when, in place of being punished, the openly wicked are granted a special, favoured status above others, there is indeed a bold defiance of God.

A final objection to the legislation, even as presently enacted, is that it *expressly permits the ridicule and abuse of Christianity*: “Nothing in this Part shall be read or given effect in a way which prohibits or restricts discussion, criticism or expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult, or abuse of particular religions or the beliefs or practices of their adherents”. No allowance is proposed, however, for criticism or expressions of antipathy towards homosexuality. The extent to which the ridicule of false religion is legitimate is a moot point, but it is certain that Christ will take it very much amiss at the Day of Judgement that the laws of the United Kingdom expressly allowed for “expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult, or abuse” against the gospel and against the “beliefs and practices” of His own people. *DWBS*

Buddhist prayer at Dumfries and Galloway Council

Visitors to Thomas Boston’s church in Ettrick have perhaps been dismayed to discover, a few miles south at Eskdalemuir, a large Buddhist monastery, set up in 1967. This monastery was mentioned in the BBC News recently over an invitation to open a meeting of the Dumfries and Galloway Council with Buddhist prayer. Three members of the Council (out of 47) absented

themselves from the prayer on religious grounds. One of them, Mr Denis Male, explained that he could not attend the prayer because he was “a Christian, born again in the faith of my Lord Jesus Christ, who I believe died on the cross and shed His blood to absolve me of my sin.”

A councillor from another political party, Mr Ted Brown, tried to make political capital out of the situation. He asserted that the three absentees showed “disrespect” towards the Buddhist religion, were in breach of the promise they made on taking office to “represent their constituents irrespective of race, colour, or creed,” and should “apologise”. He stated that he would report them to the Standards Commission for Scotland. On enquiry to the Standards Commission, the three councillors discovered that Mr Brown had not carried out his threat; presumably he realised how feeble his case was.

The incident highlights the natural opposition in the human heart towards Christ, which is ready to break out on any occasion. But it also illustrates the effectiveness even of a mild Christian witness. A stand against evil – in this case, against countenancing false religion – often has an impact, far beyond what was expected, on the consciences of others. DWBS

Creeping Islamisation of Britain

Since last June, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has had a new Secretary General, Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari. As head of MCB he is possibly the most influential Muslim voice in the country. In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph* he said that his aim is not only to encourage Muslims to be good British citizens but also to encourage Britain to adopt more Muslim ways. He thinks, for instance, that non-Muslim Britons would benefit from having arranged marriages. More recently, Bari has accused Britain of having such negative perceptions of Muslims that it is becoming like Nazi Germany.

It is not surprising to hear him air such views when, according to the Chairman of the Muslim Educational Centre of Oxford, the MCB is a “fundamentalist organisation” which “has taken the lead in perpetuating a medieval ideology”. Bari also chairs the East London Mosque, which is said in a recent report, by the Policy Exchange think tank, to stock extremist “hate literature” in its bookshop. All in all, it appears that Bari is an able and vocal advocate for the Islamisation of the United Kingdom.

As we think of the impact of Islam on British life, the political correctness which prevails with regard to it, the deference paid to it – and also consider that Islam is so obviously a persecuting religion – we believe that God is showing His displeasure against us by permitting this major religious power to gain such influence. God is justly displeased with us, for we have grossly offended Him by spurning His word and relegating the Christian faith to a

subservient place. May He return to us in mercy and cause us to return to Him in repentance. NMR

Christ Dishonoured

It seems that no one will again be able to bring a prosecution under the law of blasphemy. In early December the High Court in London threw out an attempt by Christian Voice to sue the BBC over the screening of the notorious show *Jerry Springer – The Opera*. When the programme was transmitted in 2005, the BBC received a record 63 000 complaints.

The High Court judges held that, under the 1968 Theatres Act, no public performance of a play could result in a prosecution for blasphemy and that broadcasters had the same protection under the 1990 Broadcasting Act. In any case, an attack on Christianity could only be successfully prosecuted if the material was so scurrilous as to shake the fabric of society and “cause civil strife”. In *The Daily Telegraph* of December 6, Mark Thompson, the Director General of the BBC had the nerve to state: “We should never offend the religious sensibilities of any group carelessly or without good cause”. It is impossible to imagine how anyone could suggest a good reason for broadcasting such a crass mockery of the Saviour.

The following day, however, the same newspaper asked in an editorial if the BBC “would have aired a show ridiculing Islam”, and went on: “If the answer is, No, because of the potential for violent protest, then the conclusion must be that there is one standard for Christianity, whose adherents would be likely to stay within the law, and another for religions whose followers might feel no such compunction”. Clearly Christ was dishonoured in the broadcast; He is further dishonoured when the law has so degenerated that there can, it seems, be no possibility of a prosecution in such a situation.

Protestant View

Indulgences at Lourdes

The Pope has announced that he is offering plenary indulgences to Roman Catholics who travel to Lourdes this year, the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the claimed appearance there of the Virgin Mary to a shepherdess, Bernadette Soubirous. The offer is open until 8 December 2008!

Rome teaches that most of her people do not go directly to heaven when they die but must spend time in purgatory to be punished for their remaining sin, and purified from it. However, by fulfilling the conditions prescribed in the indulgence announcement, it is possible to have that punishment can-

celled partially or fully (according as the indulgence is partial or plenary).

The previous pope announced indulgences in 1998 for those who would make certain pilgrimages, or perform good deeds, or fast for at least one whole day, or give donations of money to the poor. On this occasion the requirement is to visit certain locations in Lourdes, but an indulgence will also be granted to those who, during 2-11 February 2008, “visit, in any church, grotto, or decorous place, the blessed image of that same Virgin of Lourdes, solemnly exposed for public veneration, and before the image participate in a pious exercise of Marian devotion”. An indulgence has even been promised to those unable to make the pilgrimage because of ill-health or some other reason, if they “spiritually visit the above-mentioned places” (whatever that means) and offer their prayers during the same period of February.

The commercial sound of the conditions of the papal offer highlight the utter absurdity of thinking that, by such activities, one can obtain pardon of sin against the infinitely holy and just God. Even more serious is the blasphemous nature of the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences; they deny the sufficiency of the atoning death of Christ, which completely removes the sin of a believer, so that he may enter heaven immediately when he dies.

The doctrine of indulgences figured prominently in the Reformation. J H Merle d’Aubigné, the nineteenth-century historian of that period, commented: “Calvin was not slow to perceive that, according to the teaching of the popes, the natural powers of man have not been corrupted by the Fall, but only weakened, so that man might still have some power to save himself. He saw that from this Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism proceeded all the errors of Popery – good works, meritorious penances, human expiations, *indulgences*, the merits of the saints, all (in short) that is substituted for the fullness of grace. And against these errors and many others he set out the great truth: All salvation comes by the grace of Christ” (*Let Christ Be Magnified*, Banner of Truth Trust reprint, 2007, pp 30,31, emphasis added). “The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). NMR

Jesuits’ Huge Payment

When the news of abuse by Roman Catholic priests in the USA and Ireland was breaking in the late 1990s, it was expected that many more instances would come to light – and so it has proved. One of the most recent involves 12 priests and three missionaries of the Jesuit order, accused of sexually abusing Eskimo children in 15 villages in Alaska from 1961 to 1987.

The numerous allegations led to the Jesuit order being accused of using some of the world’s most remote villages in Alaska as a dumping ground for abusive priests, but Jesuit officials have denied transferring molesting priests,

claiming that Alaska was a prestigious assignment for the most courageous and faithful! Nevertheless the Jesuit order has agreed to pay \$50 million to 110 Eskimos to settle claims of abuse, but the settlement does not require the order to admit fault, and none of the priests has faced criminal charges.

We once again see this system working as “the mystery of iniquity” – and it will continue to do so until the divine decree for its destruction is fulfilled (2 Thess 2:7,8). NMR

Church Information

“St Jude’s Pulpit” Recordings

Due to the fact that cassette tapes are becoming obsolete, it is hoped that the Glasgow “St Jude’s Pulpit” recordings will be available in CD format early in 2008, DV. At present there is an extensive library of over 3000 cassette tapes containing sermons by various ministers. Work will be carried out to make these available in CD format in the near future. (More information will be given at a later date, DV.) Recordings of sermons will be available on cassette for a short time, but only while the current stock lasts.

Frank Daubney, Clerk to the Deacons Court

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

College & Library Fund: Friend, Newcastle, Is 54:8-17, £40; Friend, Newcastle, Is 41:10, £40.

Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund: Anon, for African Missions, £270; Anon, for Thembiso Children’s Home, £200; The Barn Chapel, £125; M Gillies, Inverness, for Ingwenya Mission, £100; Miss M Scott, Llandudno, for children in Sengera, £50; Anon, for Kenya Mission security, £1000 per Rev KMW.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Dingwall: *Congregational Funds:* KAM, £40. *Sustentation Fund:* KAM, £40, both per Rev NMR.

Dornoch: *Where Most Needed:* Friend, £15 per AS.

Edinburgh: *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £50; DM & AM, £50. *Congregational Funds:* N Pearce, Wales, £117 per Rev HMC. *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £1000. *Where Most Needed:* Anon, £10.

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Laide: *Congregational Funds:* Friend, Holland, £20; J Leslie, £5, £5 per Rev DAR; Anon, for TBS calendars, £25; Friend, Aultbea, £20; E Klok, £10 per CR. *Eastern Europe Fund:* MM, £50; Anon, Laide, £100; Friend, Shildaig, £10; Anon, Shildaig, £25; £15; £25; Friend, Holland, £144.98; Anon, £20, £20; Friend, Gairloch, £20; DJG, Tarbert, £20; Anon, Lewis, £80; Isle View Residents, for Bibles, £5; JKL, Shildaig, £25; Anon, Gairloch, for fuel, £10 per Rev DAR; BC, Edinburgh, £25; KG, Gairloch, £25; KG, Shildaig, £30; KG, £20 per CR; RM, Tarbert, £10 per Rev JBJ. *Odessa Church:* Anon, Shildaig, £50; IM, Edinburgh, £200; Friend, Aultbea, £60; MG, £20; Anon, £1000 per Rev DAR. *Magazine Fund:* Friend, Aultbea, £20 per CR, £30 per Rev DAR.

North Uist: *Church/Manse Repairs:* Anon, in memory of the late Mrs Catherine MacDonald, £250 per Rev DMD. *Communion Expenses:* SMK, £100.

FREE PRESBYTERIAN PLACES OF WORSHIP

Scotland

Aberdeen: 2 Alford Place, AB10 1YD. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Tuesday, 7.15 pm. Rev D W B Somerset BSc DPhil, 18 Carlton Place, Aberdeen, AB15 4BQ. Tel: 01224 645250.

Bracadale & Strath: Broadford: no services at present. **Struan:** Sabbath 12 noon; Wednesday 7 pm (fortnightly). Contact Rev J R Tallach, Raasay; tel: 01478 660216.

Breascleite: Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thursday 7 pm.

Dingwall & Beaully: Dingwall: Church, Hill Street: Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. **Beaully** (Balblair): Sabbath 6.30 pm, Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev Neil M Ross BA, Dingwall, 10 Achary Rd, IV15 9JB. Tel/Fax: 01349 864351, e-mail: nmross@ferintosh.co.uk.

Dornoch: Sabbath 11.30 am. **Bonar:** Sabbath 6 pm. Wednesday 7.30 pm (alternately in Dornoch and Bonar). Rev D J MacDonald MA, F P Manse, Evelix, Dornoch, Sutherland, IV25 3RD. Tel: 01862 811138. **Lairg:** Church and Manse; **Rogart:** Church; no F P services.

Dundee: Manse. No F P Church services.

Edinburgh: 63 Gilmore Place, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev Hugh M Cartwright MA, Napier House, 8 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5DS. Tel: 0131 447 1920.

Farr, by Daviot: Sabbath 12 noon and 5.15 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm (fortnightly). **Stratherrick:** Sabbath 7 pm (fortnightly); Thursday 7.30 pm (fortnightly). **Tomatin:** Sabbath 7 pm (fortnightly); Wednesday 7.30 pm (fortnightly). Rev Allan J Macdonald MA, F P Manse, Farr, Inverness, IV2 6XF. Tel: 01808 521357; e-mail: ajm@snmail.co.uk.

Fort William: Monzie Square, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm. Manse: 15 Perth Place, PH33 6UL. Tel: 01397 708553. Contact Mr Forbes Fraser. Tel: 01397 772862.

Gairloch (Ross-shire): Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm. Prayer meeting in **Strath**, Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev A E W MacDonald MA, F P Manse, Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BS. Tel: 01445 712247.

Glasgow: St Jude's Church, 137 Woodlands Road, G3 6LE. Sabbath 11 am and 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev Roderick MacLeod BA, 4 Laurel Park Close, Glasgow, G13 1RD. Tel 0141 954 3759.

Glendale: Sabbath 12 noon (fortnightly). **Vatten:** Sabbath 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm (fortnightly). **Waternish:** As intimated.

Greenock: 40 East Hamilton Street, Sabbath 11 am.

Halkirk: Sabbath 11.30 am, 5 pm; Thursday 7 pm. Manse tel: 01847 831758. **Wick:** Church; **Thurso:** Church; **Strathly:** Church; no F P Church services.

Harris (North): Tarbert: Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm. **Stockinish:** Tuesday 7 pm. Rev J B Jardine BD, F P Manse, Tarbert, Isle of Harris, HS3 3DF. Tel: 01859 502253, e-mail: northharris.fpc@btopenworld.com.

Harris (South): Leverburgh: Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm. **Sheilebost:** Sabbath 12 noon (except first Sabbath of month). Prayer meetings in **Leverburgh, Northton, Sheilebost, Strond** and **Geocrab** as intimated. Rev K D Macleod BSc, F P Manse, Leverburgh, HS5 3UA. Telfax: 01859 520271.

Inverness: Chapel Street, IV1 1PF, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev G G Hutton BA, 11 Auldcastle Road, IV2 3PZ. Tel: 01463 712872.

Kinlochbervie: Sabbath 11.30 am; Tuesday 7.30 pm. Manse: Tel. 01971 521268. **Scourie:** Sabbath 6 pm.

Kyle of Lochalsh: Sabbath 6 pm. Manse tel: 01599 534933. **Plocton:** No F P services. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.

Laide (Ross-shire): Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev D A Ross. F P Manse, Laide, IV22 2NB. Tel: 01445 731340.

Lochcarron: Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Manse.

Lochinver: Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm. Manse tel: 01571 844484.

Ness: Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Manse tel: 01851 810228.

North Tolsta: Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thursday 7 pm; 1st Monday of month 7 pm. Rev D Campbell MA, F P Manse, North Tolsta, HS2 0NH. Tel: 01851 890286.

North Uist: Bayhead: Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm (fortnightly). **Sollas:** Wednesday 7.30 pm (fortnightly). Rev D Macdonald BA, F P Manse, Bayhead, North Uist, HS6 5DS. Tel: 01876 510233.

Oban: Church and Manse. No F P services at present.

Perth: Pomarium, off Leonard Street. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Manse tel: 01738 442992. Contact Mr J N MacKinnon; tel: 01786 451386.

Portree: Sabbath 12 noon, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7 pm (Church Hall). Contact Rev W A Weale; tel: 01470 562243.

Raasay: Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev James R Tallach MB ChB, F P Manse, Raasay, Kyle, IV40 8PB. Tel: 01478 660216, fax: 01478 660358.

Shieldaig: Sabbath 11 am; **Applecross:** Sabbath 6pm. Tuesday 7 pm (alternately in Shieldaig and Applecross). Shieldaig manse tel: 01520 755259, Applecross manse tel: 01520 744207. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.

Staffin: Sabbath 12 noon, 5 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev W A Weale, F P Manse, Staffin, IV51 9UX. Tel: 01470 562243.

Stornoway: Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm. **Sandwick:** Last Tuesday of month 7.15 pm. **Achmore:** Sabbath 12 noon; Tuesday 7 pm. Manse tel: 01851 702755.

Tain: Church and Manse. **Fearn:** Church. No F P services. See Dornoch and Bonar.

Uig (Lewis) Miavaig: Sabbath 12 noon Gaelic, 6 pm English; Wednesday 7 pm. Manse tel: 01851 672251.

Ullapool: Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Manse: Quay Street, IV26 2UE. Tel: 01854 612449.

England

Barnoldswick: Kelbrook Road, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Friday 7.30 pm; Wednesday 8 pm, alternately in Haslington and Gatley. **South Manchester:** Sabbath 6.00 pm, in Trinity Church, Massie Street, Cheadle (entry at rear of building). Contact Mr R Middleton, 4 Rhodes Close, Haslington, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5ZF. Tel: 01270 255024. Manse tel: 01282 851782.

London: Zoar Chapel, Varden St, E1. Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. **Broadstairs:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm at Portland Centre, Hopeville Ave, St Peter's; Tuesday 7 pm at Friends' Meeting House, St Peters Park Rd. Rev J MacLeod MA, 6 Church Ave, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 6BU. Tel: 0208 309 1623.

Northern Ireland

Larne: Station Road. Sabbath 11.30 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 8 pm. Manse, 23 Upper Cairncastle Road, Larne BT40 2EF. Tel: 02828 274865. Contact: 02828 273294.

Canada

Chesley, Ontario: Manse and Church, 40 Fourth Street SW. Sabbath 10.30 am, 7 pm; Wednesday 8 pm. Contact Mr David Kuiper, Tel: 519 363 0367. Manse tel: 519 363 2502.

Toronto, Ontario: Church and Manse. No F P Church services at present.

Vancouver, British Columbia: Fifteenth Avenue and Fraser Street. For F P Church services contact Mr John MacLeod, 202-815 4th Avenue, New Westminster, V3M 1S8. Tel: 604-516-8648.

USA

Santa Fe, Texas: Suite B, 12221 Highway 6. Sabbath 10.30 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Contact: Mr Joseph Smith, 13732 West Sixth Street, Santa Fe, Texas 77517. Tel 409 927 1564.

Australia

Grafton, NSW: 172 Fitzroy Street. Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev E A Rayner BA, 23 Nairn Terrace, Junction Hill 2460 (mail to: PO Box 1171 Grafton, 2460). Tel: 02 6644 6044.

Sydney, NSW: Corner of Oxford and Regent Streets, Riverstone. Sabbath 10.30 am, 6.30 pm; Tuesday 7.30 pm. Information contact: Mr C MacKenzie, P O Box 5, Riverstone, NSW 2765. Tel: 02 4730 2797. E-mail: cal.01@optusnet.com.au.

New Zealand

Auckland: 45 Church Street, Otahuhu, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. For further information contact Mr C van Kralingen, 3 Earls Court, Manurewa. Tel: 09 266 7618.

Gisborne: 463a Childers Road. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday and Saturday 7.30 pm. Rev J A T van Dorp, 14 Thomson Street, Gisborne. Tel: 06 868 5809.

Tauranga: Girl Guide Hall, 17th Avenue, Sabbath 11 am, 7 pm. For information contact: Mr Dick Vermeulen, Tel: 075443677.

Wellington: 4 Rewa Terrace, Tawa. Sabbath 11 am, 4 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. For further information contact Mr N Hicklin, 117 Woodman Drive, Tawa, Wellington. Tel: 04 232 7308.

Israel

Jerusalem: Lord's Day: 12 noon, 7 pm. YMCA Chapel, 26 King David Street, Jerusalem. Rev J L Goldby, P O Box 68001, Arnona, Jerusalem 91680. Tel: 00972 2 6739058. For details of weekday meetings please contact Mr Goldby.

Singapore

Singapore: Sabbath: 9.30am and 5.30pm; Wednesday: 7.45pm. Room: "Tanglin III" (Level 2), 60 Stevens Road, Singapore 257854. Contact: Mr Bernard Yong, 4 Chuan Place, Singapore 554822. Tel: (65) 6383 4466, fax: 6383 4477, e-mail: byong1@singnet.com.sg.

Ukraine

Odessa: Contact Mr I Zadorozhnyi, P O Box 100, Odessa-91, 65091; e-mail: antipa@eurocom.od.ua; or Mr D Levitskiyy, tel: 00380 482326685; e-mail: dmlev@eurocom.od.ua.

Zimbabwe

Bulawayo: Lobengula Township, PO Magwegwe, Bulawayo. Rev S Khumalo, F P Manse, Stand No 56004, Mazwi Road, Lobengula, PO Magwegwe, Bulawayo. Tel: 00263 9407131.

Ingwanya: Church and Secondary School. Rev A B MacLean; e-mail: amaclea@mweb.co.zw. Postal Address: Ingwenya Mission, Private Bag T5445, Bulawayo. John Tallach School: tel: 00263 85343.

Mbumba: Church and Hospital: Postal Address: Mbumba Mission Hospital, Private Bag T5406, Bulawayo. Hospital tel: 00263 898291.

New Canaan: Church: Rev Z Mazvabo. Postal Address: Private Bag 615, Zvishavane. Tel 00263 512196.

Zenka: Church. Rev M Mloyi. Postal Address: Private Bag T5398, Bulawayo. Cell phone: 0026311 765032.

Kenya

Senega: Rev K M Watkins, PO Box 3403, Kisii; e-mail: watkinskenya@access350.co.ke. Tel: 00254 733 731002.

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